

sistibly reminded us of the church ceremonial, and it all happened so suddenly that we couldn't wake up from the notion.

Mouths, eyes and ears full of water, choking, spluttering and gasping, the Captains were at the mercy of their captors. Over and over we heard the query, first from one minister and then the other: "Do you promise?"

At every stubborn shake of the dripping heads, under they were doused once more.

Well, naturally the baptism idea wore off our imaginations after a time. I don't remember just what was said, but we crowded down to the banks, and we allowed to the parsons that though they were the shepherds of their flocks and all that, still this particular sheep-washing had gone about far enough. We didn't propose to stand by and see two men drowned—and that seemed to be just the stuffiness of the two Captains.

Parson Davison stood right up in the water, still with a good firm grip on the neck of his man. He was wet, but he was almighty impressive. "Men, listen! Ye canna' know all the secret ways of your nee-bors as do their spiretual counsellors. Men hide their troubles in their breasts, but the women-folk bring their waefu' stories to our sympathizing ears. This men's seester—" he shook his miserable captive—"lo'es him"—he jerked his mud-spotted face at Cole whom Wormell was clutching securely.

"This man's sister," said Elder Wormell, "thinks the world o' that brand of sin yonder, for so she has told me, and both these men are so hoggrish and full of wicked pride that they won't give up."

"They lo'e the lassies too!" shouted Davison. "They hae told the lassies so, and then each turned about in his sinfu' selfishness and tried to keep the other from the guid lass who wanted him. An' all for nowt—all for nowt except to act like growling dogs in the manger."

Well, you may believe that all this was news to us. It was easy enough to understand why neither Mose Britt nor Sile Cole could help falling in love with those two girls. And it was just as easy to understand that they'd rather have their hearts cut out—those two chaps would—than own up and give in when it came to the pinch. We all began to understand the inside of some things that we hadn't seen through before.

"It's the pride of fules!" roared Parson Davison.

"All for spache of th' p'aple. Bah!" said Elder Wormell, his brogue cropping out in his wrath.

"Wicked spite of the fathers descending to the children!" sneered the old Scotchman.

"Two poor gur-rls breaking their hearts," said the other minister feelingly.

"Noo, men, what shall we do with these unrighteous sons of pride that would ha'e led ye just noo into their own quarrel?" the Starks parson shouted, his knee on his squirming townsman.

The nature of that day's operations was plainer to us now. The humor of the whole thing struck the hundred men present, all at the same time.

"Hold them under, elders, till they shake hands and kiss each other for their sisters' sakes!" yelled a voice, and the howl that followed showed that the vote was unanimous. Do you hint that this was desertion and betrayal of our leaders? or that we were too readily forgetting the old scores? Oh, no! Allow me to remind you that chivalry to the women-folk came first in the duties of the militia in the good old days. Furthermore, it was a mean thing to do, to fall in love in such fashion and hide it all from admiring fellow-townsmen. Men who would cover up a matter like that would be just the ones to sly off and get married in secret, so as to make us lose a chance to serenade them.

Down we all tore into the water and massed around the four men, Starks patting Byron on the back and Byron embracing Starks in ecstasy of jollification. The only four men with sober faces were the two elders, serious and entreating, and the two Captains, glaring with their mud-smeared faces, at bay like strange water animals.

But at last the general hilarity was too



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much for them. And the worst was over—the publication of it, as you might say. Their scowls melted into twisted grins—very muddy grins. Their hands—very muddy hands—advanced slowly and met in a clasp, and then—"Kiss each other for your sisters' sakes!" the yell went on—they simply had to kiss each other, driven together by the thrusting fists of a dozen men till their muddy noses rubbed.

And then Parson Davison, whose iron face didn't have the wrinkle of a smile on it from start to finish, hushed us into silence, and standing right there in the water called down a benediction on the assembled warriors of Starks and Byron and invoked a peace that has not been broken since.

There was a double wedding on a June evening pretty quick—two ministers officiating, and you must know who they were—and the wedding took place on that little island in the river, both towns sending every man, woman and child to the banks, for it all was what you might call the ratification of an international truce. Bonfires blazed on either shore. When "Here We Come From Old Starks' Lighthouse" wasn't shaking the air, 'twas "Bought 'Em in Byron, Hooray-Hooray!" We crowned with flowers an effigy dressed in bed-ticking pants, and Byron sent over the river ten tar barrels to burn on the top of Stark's lighthouse—and the flames tossed and flared until they were pale by the morning sun—and lots of us hadn't gone to bed even then.

What Toddy Heard

(Continued from page 12)

you wrote asking me for her, I intended to say: "Take her and God bless you both!" but—he hesitated.

"But?" I queried.

"By some queer fluke of fate, I happened to go out that night in the train with Dr. Dick. You know he proposed to Kathryne the year before you met her. I thought he had got over his fancy for her; so I spoke of you to him, and he told me—"

"That I was a fortune-hunter and a cad?"

"He just did!" almost shouted the General, "and, by jove, sir, he was so deuced plausible that I actually believed him!"

"And now?" I offered my hand.

"Now," said he, giving me a rousing slap upon the shoulder. "I happen to know that Kathryne is at the other end of that telephone. Go tell her that her old daddy is bringing out her future husband to dinner."

"And so you are engaged?" said "The Commodore" rather forlornly, for Mr. Ned and he always have been more like brothers than elderly uncle and nephew.

"Yes," said Mr. Ned, speaking softly. "Commodore, I have won my girl."

Suddenly he spied poor me. He must have understood how out of it I felt, for he patted my back kindly. "And Toddy has won the sweetest mistress in the world," he added.

The night before the wedding "The Commodore," Mr. Ned and I dined together in the old master's rooms.

After we had finished "The Commodore" spoke to me. "Toddy," said he, "I have a little surprise for you and Mr. Ned. Here is a deed which I wish you to witness formally, if you will."

He laid a big, yellow-looking paper upon the table before me. To my shame I cannot read or write. He understood.

"Make your mark," said he, whereupon he dipped my paw in a spot of ink, and I then and there made a mark, thus formally witnessing the deed that made Mr. Ned the possessor of twenty-five thousand dollars, a gift from my old to my young master. Talk about gratitude! Well, we won't talk about it; "The Commodore" insisted that we should not. But I doubt if anywhere on earth were a happier three that night.

They have been married for a month. So have Nellie and I; for the old lady across the way from the General's died last month, and left Nellie to Miss Kathryne.



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